

Working 9 to 5 and Getting 5 to 9 *(fruits & vegetables, that is)*

If you're like most Americans, you find it hard to consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables in your daily diet. In fact, our lives are so busy (from getting ready for work, commuting to work, working, and coming home to work the "second shift") that it's hard enough just finding time to eat—let alone finding time to eat the recommended 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables.

But have no fear—there's no reason to get down about your diet. Below, you'll find three strategies that will help you eat great throughout the day, no matter where you are, what your budget is like, or how much time you have.

Step #1: Incorporate Fruits & Veggies Into Every Meal.

If you think about it, fruits and veggies are actually some of the fastest and simplest foods to eat and cook with. Below you'll find some ideas on how to fit fruits and vegetables into your daily eating routine.

Breakfast

Slice a banana or some strawberries on top of your usual bowl of cereal. You may also want to drink some fruit juice. As long as it's 100% juice, just 6 ozs. counts as one serving toward your five-a-day.

Lunch

Pack some carrot sticks or broccoli for dipping instead of those greasy potato chips. Not only will you get one of your five-a-day servings out of the way, but you'll cut fat and calories at the same time.

Dinner

There's nothing like a baked potato as part of a healthy dinner—as long as you don't load it up with toppings that increase calories and fat. Also, cooking up a can of corn or green beans in the microwave is about as simple as it gets.

Step #2: Make Your Fruits & Veggies Work For You.

Depending on what you buy and when, fresh fruits and veggies can be expensive. But they don't have to be. Check out these tips for saving big when it comes to getting your five-a-day.

Be A Bargain Hunter

When learning how to shop smart for fruits and vegetables, you'll need to learn your prices. Once you have a good idea of what constitutes a good deal, you'll be able to load up on your favorite items. Don't forget, it helps tremendously if you can buy produce that's in season and local. You won't pay extra to have it shipped.

Freeze!

Once you learn to recognize a bargain when you see one, chances are you'll have too much produce to eat before it spoils. The solution? Just freeze it. There's nothing wrong with freezing fruit. It keeps very well and in some cases, can make fruit even easier to work with. Consider refrigerating bananas, the skins may darken, but they'll last a few days longer.

Let It Grow

Looking for the ultimate money saving technique when it comes to getting your five-a-day? Grow a garden! Sure, there will be some expense wrapped up in seed, water, and fertilizer, but the cost will

be quite low. Plus, there's nothing quite like the feeling of eating homegrown food. Eat healthy and start a new hobby all at once!

Step #3: Get Your Five On The Go.

There's no doubt that Americans are working harder, and spending more time at work than at any other point in history. But this no excuse to eat poorly—in fact, quite the opposite is true. If we're going to maintain our work pace, we have to make sure we're getting the nutrition and energy we need. The fact is, you can get your five-a-day no matter where you are.

Eating Away from Home

The key to getting your five-a-day—even when you're away from the house—is substituting. Just because your favorite restaurant has certain menu items, doesn't mean you have to stick to them. Try substituting fresh fruit for fries, or vegetables in place of potato chips.

Eating In The Car

Americans are spending more and more time in their cars—either commuting to and from work, or racing around running errands. To eat healthier when you're out and about, try keeping some dried fruit in your glove compartment, or bring something easy like cauliflower or grapes to snack on in between stops.

At Work

Most foods people consume at work come straight from the vending machine. And these foods, rather than being loaded with healthy vitamins and minerals, are packed with extra calories and loads of fat. The following tips can help you eat healthier when you're at the office.

- ☉ *Bring fresh fruit for everyone at your next staff meeting, instead of bagels or donuts.*
- ☉ *Store dried fruits such as raisins in your desk. This way, there's no reason to hit the vending machine.*
- ☉ *Collect recipes for salads or other healthy dishes that are quick and easy to prepare.*

